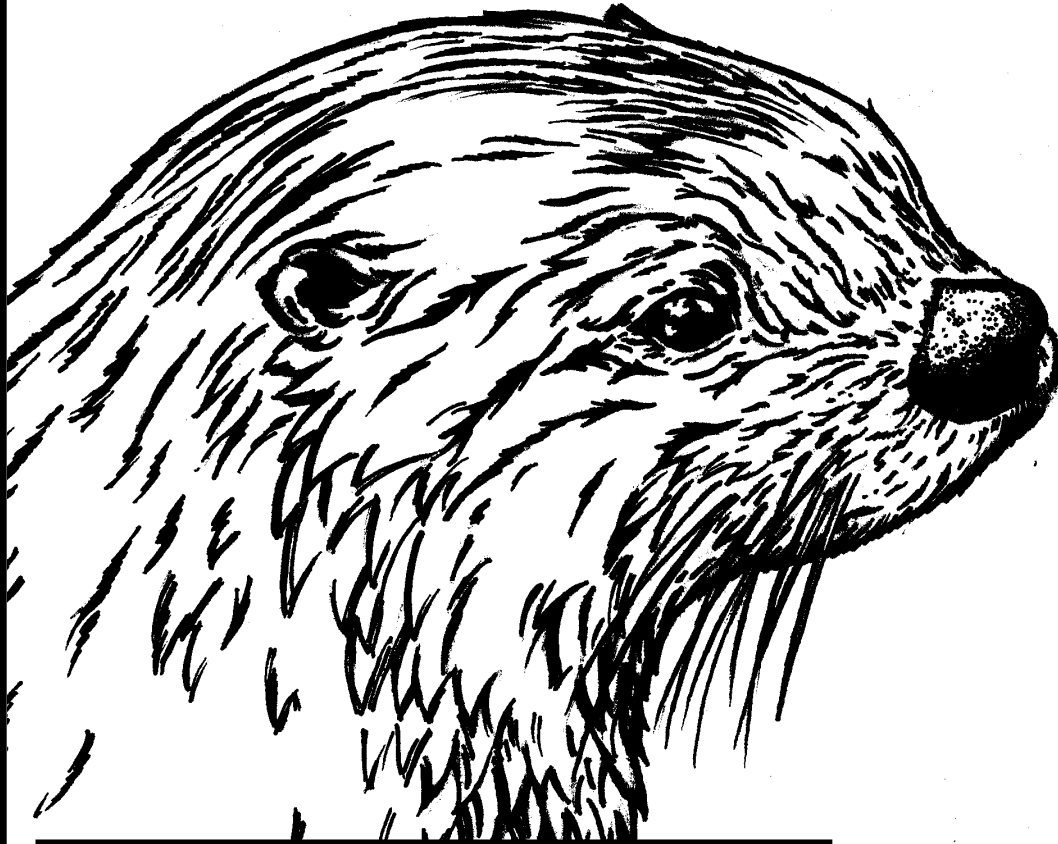


RIVER OTTER



River Otter

Scientific Name: *Lutra canadensis*

River otters belong to the family Mustelidae, which includes weasels, badgers, skunks, and otters. The river otter measures 35 to 53 inches from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail. Generally active at night, river otters are aquatic animals that often sun themselves on rocks or riverbanks during the day. River otters communicate with a variety of squeals, chirps, chatters, chuckles, screams, and warning growls. A river otter eats mainly fish, plus crayfish, frogs, salamanders, snakes, clams, snails, turtles, birds, and insects. Thick, compact fur helps keep the river otter insulated as it swims in even very cold water. Long guard hairs protect the underfur, which traps air, keeping the otter's skin dry.